

## PART VI

## Livestock, Dairying and Poultry

General Importance

Livestock farming, based primarily on beef, dairy products and poultry, has become of secondary importance in Benton County. With additional irrigated cropland and the expansion of dryland grain farming in the last 15 years, livestock and animal products have become third in the agricultural economy behind grain and fruit farming. In 1954 there were about 140 farms specializing in cattle, sheep and hogs; 155 specialized in dairying and 57 were classed as poultry farms. All livestock farms, including poultry, sold animals and products worth about \$2,944,500 in 1954. This ranked Benton County eleventh in state in value of livestock industries. The county is noted for its turkey production which ranked third in the state in 1954. Its sheep industry, while greatly reduced, held a position of eighth. The beef cattle population, which has been increased, ranked nineteenth in the state in 1954.

When last measured by the Census in 1949, the value of all livestock and poultry kept on farms amounted to \$2,081,693. More recent estimates based on

Total Value of all Livestock and Poultry on Farms: \$3,685,000

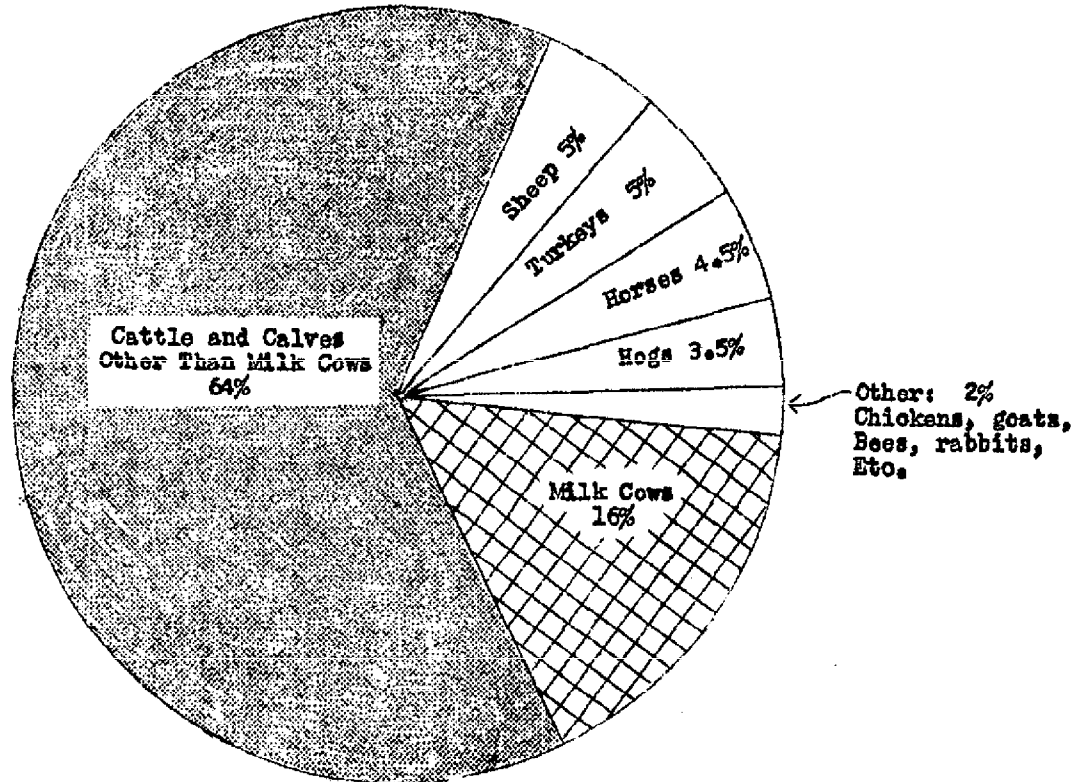


Figure 11.- Value of Livestock and Poultry  
Benton County, 1954.  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

far larger turkey and cattle population indicate this value approximated \$3,685,000 by 1954.

### Livestock Trends

Livestock and poultry farming has changed considerably since 1920. A large increase in cattle, particularly beef breeds, has been a major trend. Dairy cattle trended downward slightly after a peak in 1941. Another major trend has been the reductions in range flocks of sheep and in horses and hogs. Sheep and horses have gone down nearly two-thirds since 1939. Hog raising was down by half from 1939 to 1950 but then moved up again by 1954. Poultry farming has expanded greatly since 1920. Turkey raising is a specialty which has been increased to third rank in the state since 1939. In general, there are more livestock farms and there is greater diversification in livestock and poultry farming than in 1920.

### Cattle: Beef and Dairy Farming

The dairy and beef cattle industry of Benton County has increased in recent years. By 1954 it was third behind wheat and fruit in value in the farm economy. Cattle and dairy products marketed exceeded \$1,875,000 during that year. Beef cattle and calves are the major items in the livestock industry. Over 1,000 farms were keeping cattle in 1954 and about 600 farms sold a total of over 10,500 head during that year.

Table 32.- Livestock Numbers on Farms  
Benton County, 1939-1956

Year	January 1 Numbers on Farms		
	All Cattle (head)	Beef Cattle (head)	Dairy Cattle (head)
1939	10,000	1,800	8,200
1940	10,600	2,200	8,400
1941	11,200	2,600	8,600
1942	12,100	3,600	8,500
1943	12,700	4,500	8,200
1944	11,500	3,600	7,900
1945	10,500	3,000	7,500
1946	10,100	2,500	7,600
1947	10,300	4,400	5,900
1948	10,000	4,200	5,800
1949	10,200	4,400	5,800
1950	10,900	4,800	6,100
1951	12,900	6,500	6,400
1952	16,100	9,800	6,300
1953	18,000	11,400	6,600
1954	19,700	13,000	6,700
1955	23,900	16,800	7,100
1956	25,300	18,000	7,300

Source: U.S.D.A., AMS, Estimates Division  
State of Washington

The cattle population has gone up from 10,000 head to 25,300 head during the period 1939-1956. The increase was entirely in beef cattle which went up from 1,800 head to 18,000 head. Dairy cattle slightly decreased. High prices for beef during the World War II years and the Korean conflict were major factors in the expansion of beef cattle. Range pasture and dry-lot feeding in the lower Yakima Valley surrounding Prosser and Benton City and in the Horse Heaven Hills has been greatly expanded. Cattle herds vary in size. In the Horse Heaven Hills and along the Columbia River at Paterson and Plymouth there are numerous herds of 100 or more head. The Benton City district has over 10,000 head of cattle and is the leading cattle area in the county.

Dairy farming has been on an uptrend in recent years. Dairy farms have increased from 130 to 155 since 1949 and whole milk production reached a new peak of 14,821,825 pounds in 1954. Although dairy cattle are less in number, milk production per cow has been increased. A major trend in dairy farming has been the shift to fluid milk marketing in urban areas from an earlier system of selling cream to creameries and butter plants in the Yakima Valley. Farm-churned butter has also declined as a dairy product. Dairy herds vary in size from 10 to over 40 head. Most dairy breeds of cattle are in the Prosser district which had about 1,900 milk cows at the time of the 1954 Census.

Table 33.- Dairy Products Sold From Farms  
Benton County, 1929-1954

Year	Whole Milk Sold From Farms		Cream Sold From Farms		Butter Sold From Farms	
	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)	(pounds)	(dollars)
1920	403,365	\$ 8,100	1,032,000	\$310,000	36,226	\$18,500
1929	2,228,088	51,820	750,269	360,130	3,249	1,288
1939	2,333,660	51,340	709,726	177,430	4,011	1,120
1944	11,571,386	370,280	178,886	89,400	1,220	550
1949	9,152,107	384,390	79,757	48,650	479	290
1954	14,821,825	558,030	78,751	42,810	201	105

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture

### Sheep

Since 1939 there has been a great decline in sheep. In 1954 sheep population was down to 11,806 compared with 31,494 in 1939. Large range flocks, common up to 1940, have nearly disappeared to be replaced by smaller farm flocks kept on irrigated pastures. In 1954, however, Benton County ranked eighth in the state in sheep and the lamb and wool crop was valued at nearly \$200,000. There were 92 farms raising sheep in 1954 compared with 70 in 1949. According to Census of 1954, the largest flocks and greatest number of sheep were reported by ranches in the Horse Heaven Hills and Columbia Gorge area of southern Benton County. In this upland area there were four farms with a total of 4,225 head of sheep averaging over 1,000 head per farm. In the Prosser area of the Roza Irrigation District there were 3,300 head on 20 farms. The Benton City area had 2,118 head reported by 19 farms. Small farm flocks of less than 20 head were common in the Kennewick district.

Hogs

The raising of hogs has declined since 1939. Hogs were at a low of 2,814 head in 1949, but in 1954 were back up to 3,142 head. Swine are kept on over 300 farms but only about 150 make commercial sales of live head for slaughter. Feeding with local grown corn, barley and wheat has been on a slight increase. Butchering for home prepared pork has declined in the last 15 years. Hogs are well distributed over the irrigated areas as a sideline on general livestock and crop farms and the Prosser district has the most swine with over 1,400 head.

Table 34.- Hogs, Sheep, Horses and Mules  
Benton County, 1939-1954

Census Year	Hogs (head)	Sheep (head)	Horses and Mules (head)
1939	5,109	31,494	3,421
1944	3,227	9,788	2,053
1949	2,814	29,584	1,568
1954	3,142	11,806	1,145

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Horses and Mules

Horses and mules have declined sharply with each census since 1920, following the same pattern as for the state as a whole. In 1920 there were 7,265 head of domestic horses on the farms and ranches of Benton County. In addition, there were large numbers of wild horses ranging the Horse Heaven and Rattlesnake Hills. By 1954 there were only 1,145 head and wild horses were rare. The mechanization of wheat farming and other types of farm work and transportation brought about the decline. In 1954 there were 390 farms keeping horses for riding and some farm work. Horses were evenly distributed over all farming districts averaging two to three head per farm with very few sizeable herds. Only about 30 farms sold horses commercially and only about 115 head were sold during 1954.

Poultry Farming

Poultry farming, particularly turkey raising, has been well developed in Benton County's irrigated districts. The value of this industry has nearly doubled since 1949, going up from \$456,000 to nearly \$730,000 by 1954. About 65 farms were specializing in either chickens or turkeys in 1954, but a far larger number raised poultry as a sideline. Over 400 farms sold poultry or poultry products during 1954. The vastly increased population in nearby cities of Prosser, Kennewick, Richland and Pasco recently stimulated more specialization in poultry raising in the lower Yakima Valley and Pasco Basin.

The raising of chickens and egg production has remained about the same since the peak year of 1944. Over 300 farms were selling eggs in 1954. About 200 were selling meat chickens. There were seven broiler (fryer chicken) specialty farms which produced 35,000 fryers for the local markets during 1954.

Turkey raising is by far the major type of poultry industry. In 1954 Benton County was the third ranking commercial turkey raising area of the state behind Yakima and Lewis Counties. In 1954 there were 64 farms raising turkeys whose production was over 90,000 birds, bringing sales returns of over \$500,000 per year. Heavy breeds of turkeys are raised in preference to light breeds. About 15 farms were specializing in breeding stock and selling eggs and poults to turkey feeders. Turkey feeding is most common in the Prosser and Benton City districts. Dry climate and plentiful local supplies of feed grain favor this specialty.

Total Value of Poultry and Poultry Products Sold  
in 1954 - \$729,789

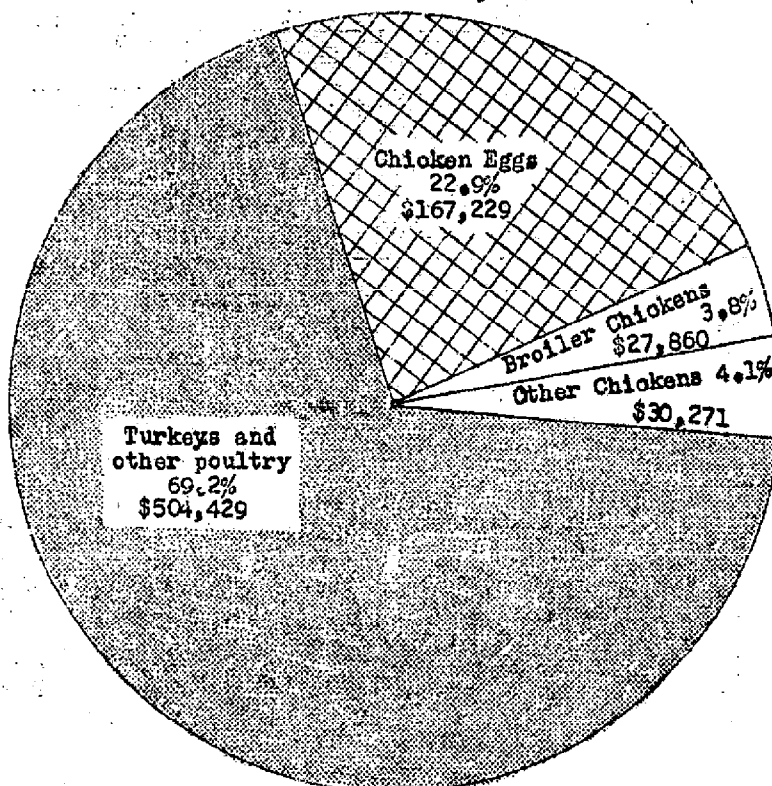


Figure 12.- Divisions of Benton County Poultry Industry  
By Products Sold in 1954.  
(Based on U.S. Census, Agriculture)

Table 35.- Chickens, Egg Production and Turkeys  
Benton County, 1939-1954

Year	Chickens (birds)	Egg Production (dozens)	Turkeys Raised (birds)
1939	57,625	447,988	4,797
1944	66,576	476,446	84,996
1949	57,960	358,507 1/	31,104
1950	57,039	379,412 1/	90,428

1/ Eggs sold only; does not include home-used eggs.

Source: U.S. Census, Agriculture

Small Animal Industry: Bees, Goats, Fur Farming

Bee keeping is an important activity. In 1954 Benton County ranked fifth in the state in numbers of bee hives and volume of honey and beeswax produced. The 1,687 hives enumerated in 1954 were less, however, than the 2,480 hives reported by the Census of 1920. In recent years about 84 farms have kept bees, but only about 20 were commercial producers with large colonies of hives. Bee keeping is practiced in the irrigated areas surrounding Prosser, Kennewick and Benton City. Bees are highly important in providing for good pollenization of tree fruits in the irrigated districts. Commercial production in recent years has been about 100,000 pounds of honey valued at \$15,000.

Goat keeping is on a minor scale. In 1954 there were only 35 farms which had goats. A total of 112 head were enumerated. Dairy type goats for on-farm use was the most common. Rabbits were kept on 136 farms in 1950. Commercial rabbit keeping is not a common practice in this area. Fur animal raising is being practiced on seven farms according to most recent data. A directory of Washington Chinchilla breeders showed that in 1957 there were six farms in the Kennewick district and one in the Prosser district keeping Chinchillas.